

R156. Commerce, Occupational and Professional Licensing.

R156-78A. Prelitigation Panel Review Rules.

R156-78A-1. Title.

These rules are known as the "Prelitigation Panel Review Rules".

R156-78A-2. Definitions.

In addition to the definitions in Section 78-14-3, which shall apply to these rules:

- (1) "Answer" means a responsive answer to a request.
- (2) "Director" means the Director of the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing.
- (3) "Meritorious claim" means that there is a basis in fact and law to conclude that the standard of care has been breached and the petitioner has been injured thereby, such that the petitioner has a reasonable expectation of prevailing at trial.
- (4) "Motion" means a request for any action or relief permitted under Sections 78-14-12 through 78-14-16 or these rules.
- (5) "Nonmeritorious claim" means that the evidence before the panel is insufficient to conclude that the case is meritorious, but does not necessarily mean the case is frivolous.
- (6) "Notice" means a notice of intent to commence action under Section 78-14-8.
- (7) "Panel" means the prelitigation panel appointed in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4) to review a request.
- (8) "Party" means a petitioner or respondent.
- (9) "Person" means any natural person, sole proprietorship, joint venture, corporation, limited liability company, association, governmental subdivision or agency, or organization of any type.
- (10) "Petitioner" means any person who files a request with the division.
- (11) "Pleadings" include the requests, answers, motions, briefs and any other documents filed by the parties to a request.
- (12) "Request" means a request for prelitigation panel review under Section 78-14-12.
- (13) "Respondent" means any health care provider named in a request.

R156-78A-3. Authority - Purpose.

These rules are adopted by the division under the authority of Subsection 78-14-12(1)(b) to define, clarify, and establish the process and procedures which govern prelitigation panel reviews.

R156-78A-4. General Provisions.

(1) Liberal Construction.

These rules shall be liberally construed to secure the just, speedy and economical determination of all issues presented to the division.

(2) Deviation from Rules.

The division may permit a deviation from these rules insofar as it may find compliance therewith to be impractical or unnecessary.

(3) Computation of Time.

The time within which any act shall be done, as herein provided, shall be computed by excluding the first day and including the last, unless the last day is Saturday, Sunday or a state holiday, and then it is excluded and the period runs until the end of the next day which is neither a Saturday, Sunday nor a holiday. When the period of time prescribed or allowed is less than seven days, intermediate Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays shall be excluded in the computation. Whenever a party has the right or is required to do some act within a prescribed period after the service of a notice or other paper upon him and the notice or paper is served upon him by mail, three days shall be added to the prescribed period.

R156-78A-5. Representations - Appearances.

(1) Representation of Parties.

A party may represent himself individually, or if not an individual, may represent itself through an officer or employee, or may be represented by counsel.

(2) Entry of Appearance of Representation.

Parties shall promptly enter their appearances by giving their names and addresses and stating their positions or interests in the proceeding. When possible, appearances shall be entered in writing concurrently with the filing of the request for petitioner and no later than 10 days from service of the request for respondent.

R156-78A-6. Pleadings.

(1) Docket Number and Title.

Upon receipt of a timely Request for Prelitigation Review, the division shall assign a two letter code identifying the matter as involving this type of request (PR), a two digit code indicating the year the request was filed, a two digit code indicating the month the request was filed, and another number indicating chronological position among requests filed during the month. The division shall give the matter a title in substantially the following form:

TABLE I

BEFORE THE DIVISION OF OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OF THE STATE OF UTAH

John Doe,
Petitioner

Request for
Prelitigation Review

-vs-

Richard Roe,
Respondent

No. PR-XX-XX-XXX

(2) Form and Content of Pleadings.

Pleadings must be double-spaced and typewritten and presented on standard 8 1/2" x 11" white paper. They must identify the proceeding by title and docket number, if known, and shall contain a clear and concise statement of the matter relied upon as a basis for the pleading, together with an appropriate prayer for relief when relief is sought. A request shall, by affirmation, set forth the date that the required notice was served, shall include a copy of the notice and shall reflect service of the request upon all parties named in the notice and request. When a petitioner fails to attach a copy of the notice to petitioner's request, the division shall return the request to the petitioner with a written notice of incomplete request and conditional denial thereof. The notice shall advise the petitioner that his request is incomplete and that the request is denied unless the petitioner corrects the deficiency within the time period specified in the notice and otherwise meets all qualifications to have the request granted.

(3) Signing of Pleadings.

Pleadings shall be signed by the party or their counsel of record and shall indicate the addresses of the party and, if applicable, their counsel of record. The signature shall be deemed to be a certification that the signer has read the pleading and that, to the best of his knowledge and belief, there is good ground to support it.

(4) Answers.

A respondent named in a request may file an answer relative to the merits set forth in the petitioner's notice. Affirmative defenses shall be separately stated and numbered in an answer or raised at the time of the hearing. Any answer must be filed no later than 15 days following the filing of the request.

(5) Motions.

(a) Motions to be Filed in Writing.

Motions shall be in writing unless the motion could not have been anticipated prior to the prelitigation panel hearing.

(b) Time Periods for Filing Motions and Responding Thereto.

(i) Motions to Withdraw a Request.

Any motion to withdraw a request shall be filed no later than five days before the prelitigation panel hearing.

(ii) Motions Directed Toward a Request.

Any motion directed toward a request shall be filed no later than 15 days after service of the request.

(iii) Motions Directed Toward the Composition of a Panel.

Any motion directed toward the composition of a panel shall be filed no later than five days after discovering a basis therefore.

(iv) Motions to Dismiss.

Any motion to dismiss shall be filed no later than five days after discovering a basis therefore.

(v) Extraordinary Motions for Discovery or Perpetuation of Evidence.

Any motion seeking discovery or perpetuation of evidence for good cause shown demonstrating extraordinary circumstances shall be filed no later than 15 days before the prelitigation panel hearing.

(vi) Response to a Motion.

A response to a motion shall be filed no later than five days after service of the motion and any final reply shall be filed no later than five days after service of the response to the motion.

(c) Affidavits and Memoranda.

The division or panel shall permit and may require affidavits and memoranda, or both, in support or contravention of a motion.

(d) The division or panel may permit or require oral argument on a motion.

R156-78A-7. Filing and Service.

(1) Filing of Pleadings. All pleadings shall be filed with the division with service thereof to all parties named in the notice. The division may refuse to accept pleadings if they are not filed in accordance with the requirements of these rules.

(2) Service. Pleadings and documents issued by the division or panel shall be served either by personal service or by first class mail. Personal service shall be made upon a party in accordance with the Utah Rules of Civil Procedure by any peace officer within the State of Utah or by any person specifically designated by the division. When an attorney has entered an appearance on behalf of any party, service upon that attorney constitutes service upon the party so represented.

(3) Proof of Service. There shall appear on all documents required to be served a certificate of service in substantially the following form:

TABLE II

I hereby certify that I have this day served the foregoing document upon the parties of record in this proceeding set forth below (by delivering a copy thereof in person) (by mailing a copy thereof, properly addressed by first class mail):

(Name of parties of record)
(addresses)

Dated this (day) day of (month), (year).

(Signature)
(Title)

R156-78A-8. Panel Selection and Compensation.

(1) The division shall commence the selection and appointment of panel members following the issuance of a notice of hearing pursuant to these rules.

(2) The selection and appointment of panel members shall be in accordance with Subsections 78-14-12(4) and (5).

(3) (a) In accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4), whenever multiple respondents are identified in a request, the division shall select and appoint a panel to sit in consideration of all claims against any respondent as follows:

(i) one lawyer member who is the chairman in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4)(a);

(ii) one lay panelist member in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4)(c);

(iii) one licensed health care provider who is practicing and knowledgeable for each specialty represented by the respondents in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4)(b)(i); and

(iv) if a hospital or their employees are named as a respondent, one member who is an individual currently serving in a hospital administration position directly related to hospital operations or conduct that includes responsibility for the area of practice that is the subject of the liability claim, in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(4)(b)(ii).

(b) The distinction between a hospital administrator and a person serving in a hospital administration position referenced in Subsection 78-14-12(4)(b)(ii) is significant and is hereby emphasized.

(c) The person serving in a hospital administration position referenced in Subsection 78-14-12(4)(b)(ii) shall be from a different facility than the facility which is the subject of the alleged medical liability case, but may be from the same umbrella organization provided the panel member certifies under oath that he is free from bias or conflict of interest with respect to any matter under consideration as required by Subsection 78-14-12(6).

(d) Petitioner and respondent may stipulate concerning the type of health care provider to be selected and appointed by the division, unless the stipulation is in violation with the panel composition requirements set forth in Subsection 78-14-12(4)(b).

(4) Upon stipulation of all parties, a motion to evaluate damages may be submitted to the division whereupon the division may appoint an additional panel member to assist in evaluating damages.

(5) The division shall ensure that panelists possess all qualifications required by statute and these rules.

(6) Upon appointment to a prelitigation panel, each member thereof shall sign a written affirmation in substantially the following form:

TABLE III

I, (panel member), hereby affirm that, as a member of a prelitigation panel, I will discharge my responsibilities without bias towards any party. I also affirm that, to the best of my knowledge, no conflict of interest exists as to any matter which will be entrusted to my consideration as a panel member.

Dated this (day) day of (month), (year).

(Signature)

(7) Panel members shall be entitled to per diem compensation and travel expenses according to a schedule as established and published by the division.

R156-78A-9. Action upon Request - Scheduling Procedures - Continuances.

(1) Action upon Request.

Upon receiving a request, the division shall issue an order approving or denying the request.

(2) Criteria for Approving or Denying a Request.

The criteria for approving or denying a request shall be whether:

- (a) the request is timely filed in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(2)(a);
 - (b) the request includes a copy of the notice in accordance with Subsection 78-14-12(2)(b); and
 - (c) the request has been mailed to all health care providers named in the notice and request as required by Subsection 78-14-2(2)(b).
- (3) Legal Effect of Denial of Request.

The denial of a request restarts the running of the applicable statute of limitations until an appropriate request is filed with the division.

(4) Scheduling Procedures.

- (a) If a request is approved, the order approving the request shall direct the party who made the request to contact all parties named in the request and notice to determine by agreement of the parties:
 - (i) what type of health care provider panelists are requested;
 - (ii) at least two dates acceptable to all parties on which a prelitigation panel hearing may be scheduled; and
 - (iii) whether or not the case will be submitted in accordance with Section R156-78A-13 and if so, the nature of the submission.
- (b) The order shall direct the party who made the request to file the scheduling information with the division, on forms available from the division, no later than 20 days following the issuance of the order.
- (c) If the party so directed fails to comply with the directive without good cause, the division shall schedule the hearing without further input from the party.
- (d) No later than five days following the filing of the approved form, the division shall issue a notice of hearing setting a date, time and a place for the prelitigation panel hearing. No hearing shall take place within the 35 day period immediately following the filing of a Request for Prelitigation Review, unless the parties and the division consent to a shorter period of time.
- (e) The division shall thereafter promptly select and appoint a panel in accordance with Subsections 78-14-12(4) and (5) and these rules.

(5) Continuances.
(a) Standard.

In order to prevail on a motion for a continuance the moving party must establish:

- (i) that the motion was filed no later than five days after discovering the necessity for the motion and at least two days before the scheduled hearing;
- (ii) that extraordinary facts and circumstances unknown and uncontrollable by the party at the time the hearing date was established justify a continuance;
- (iii) that the rights of the other parties, the division, and the panel will not be unfairly prejudiced if the hearing is continued; and
- (iv) that a continuance will serve the best interests of the goals and objectives of the prelitigation panel review process.

(b) If a continuance is granted, the order shall direct the party who requested the continuance to contact all parties named in the request and notice to establish no less than two dates acceptable to all parties, on which the prelitigation panel hearing may be rescheduled.

(c) The order shall direct the party who requested the continuance to file the scheduling information with the division, on forms approved by the division, no later than five days following the issuance of the order.

(d) If a party so directed is the petitioner and the petitioner fails to comply with the directive without good cause, the division shall dismiss the request without prejudice. Upon issuance of the order of dismissal by the division, the applicable statute of limitations on the cause of action shall no longer be tolled. The petitioner shall be required to file another request prior to the scheduling of any further proceeding and, until this request is filed, the statute of limitations shall continue to run.

(e) If a party so directed is the respondent and the respondent fails to comply with the directive without good cause, the division shall establish a date for the prelitigation panel hearing acceptable to petitioner and disallow any further motions for

continuances from respondent.

(f) No later than three days following the filing of the dates, the division shall issue a notice of hearing resetting a date, time and a place for the prelitigation panel hearing.

R156-78A-10. Consequences of Failure to Appear at a Scheduled Hearing.

(1) Except as provided by Section R156-78A-13:

(a) If a party or a representative appointed by the party fails to appear for a hearing without good cause after due notice has been provided as to the scheduling of the hearing, the hearing shall proceed in the party's absence and the party shall lose the right to present any further evidence to the panel.

(b) If neither party nor their representatives appear for a hearing without good cause after due notice has been provided as to the scheduling of the hearing, the division shall dismiss the request without prejudice. The dismissal shall terminate the tolling of the applicable statute of limitations under Subsection 78-14-12(3).

R156-78A-11. Prehearing Procedure.

The division may, upon written notice to all parties of record, schedule a prehearing conference with the panel for the purposes of formulating or simplifying the issues, obtaining admissions of fact and genuineness of documents which will avoid unnecessary proof, and agreeing to other matters as may expedite the orderly conduct of the proceedings or the settlement thereof. Agreements reached during the conference shall be recorded in an appropriate order unless the parties enter into a written stipulation on the matters or agree to a statement thereof made on the record by the chairman of the panel.

R156-78A-12. Hearing Procedures.

(1) Hearings Closed to the Public.

All hearings are closed to the public.

(2) Attendance of Panel Members.

Except where a case is submitted in written form in accordance with Section R156-78A-13, all panel members appointed shall be present during the entire hearing.

(3) Order of Presentation of Evidence.

Unless otherwise directed by the panel at the hearing, the order of procedure and presentation of evidence will be as follows:

(a) Petitioner;

(b) Respondent; and

(c) Petitioner, if the panel permits petitioner to present rebuttal evidence.

(4) Method of Presentation of Evidence.

Evidence may be presented by any party on a narrative basis or through direct examination of said party by their counsel of record. The panel may make inquiry of any party pertinent to the issues to be addressed. If a motion to evaluate damages has been granted, the panel may properly take evidence as to that issue. As set forth in Section 78-14-13, no party has the right to cross-examine, rebut, or demand that customary formalities of civil trials and court proceedings be followed. The panel may, however, request special or supplemental participation of some or all parties in particular respects, including oral argument, evidentiary rebuttal, or submission of briefs.

(5) Rules of Evidence.

Formal rules of evidence are not applicable. Any relevant evidence may be admitted if it is the type of evidence commonly relied upon by prudent people in the conduct of their affairs. The panel shall give effect to the rules of privilege recognized by law. Irrelevant, immaterial, and unduly repetitious evidence shall be excluded.

(6) Burden of Proof.

The petitioner shall be responsible for establishing a meritorious claim against any respondent, and if the issue of damages is presented, the amount of damages.

(7) Standard of Proof.

The standard of proof for prelitigation hearings is a preponderance of the evidence.

(8) Use of Evidence.

Use of evidence, documents, and exhibits submitted to a panel shall be in accordance with Subsection 78-14-13(1) and Section 78-14-14.

(9) Record of Hearing.

On its own motion, the panel may record the proceeding for the sole purpose of assisting the panel in its subsequent deliberation and issuance of an opinion. The record may be made by means of tape recorder or other recording device. No tape recorder or other device shall be used by anyone otherwise present during the proceeding to record the matter. Upon issuance by the panel of its opinion, the record of the proceeding shall be destroyed.

(10) Subpoenas and Fees.

(a) Issuance of Subpoenas.

The division may issue subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and the production of medical records in accordance with Subsection 78-14-13(2) and (3). However, except as permitted by Subsection 78-14-13(2) and (3) and in accordance with Subsection 78-14-13(4), there is not discovery or perpetuation of testimony in prelitigation panel hearings, except upon special order of the panel, and for good cause shown demonstrating extraordinary circumstances.

(b) Payment of Witness Fees.

A subpoenaed witness who appears for a prelitigation panel review shall be entitled to witness fees and mileage to be paid by the requesting party. Witnesses shall receive the same fee and mileage allowed by law to witnesses in a district court. A witness subpoenaed by a party may, at the time of service of the subpoena, demand one day's witness fee and mileage in advance and unless the fee is tendered, the witness shall not be required to appear.

R156-78A-13. Submission of Case in Written Form, by Proffer, or a Combination thereof - Requirements.

(1) A full prelitigation panel hearing is not required if the parties enter into a stipulation that no useful purpose would be served by convening a panel hearing as to any or all respondents or if the parties agree to submit their case as to any or all respondents to the panel in written form, by proffer of evidence, or by a combination thereof.

(2) Any case submitted in writing must include a legal argument addressing the relevant evidence and law with regard to the issues presented in the case.

R156-78A-14. Determination - Supplemental Opinion - Certificate of Compliance.

(1) Panel Determination.

As soon as is reasonably practicable following the conclusion of a hearing or submission of a case to the panel in accordance with Section R156-78A-13, and, if applicable, submission of briefs by the parties, the panel shall file with the division a determination whether any claim against any respondent is meritorious. If applicable, the determination shall also reflect the panel's evaluation of the damages sustained by the petitioner.

(2) Supplementary Memorandum Opinion.

Within 30 days after filing its determination, the panel shall file a memorandum opinion explaining the panel's determination. The chairman of the panel shall be responsible for the preparation of the memorandum opinion of the panel, but may delegate the initial preparation of the opinion to another member of the panel.

(3) Certificate of Compliance.

Within 15 days after receiving the panel's memorandum opinion, the director shall issue a certificate of compliance which recites that petitioner has fully complied with the requirements of Section 78-14-12. With respect to the tolling of the statute of limitations referenced in Section 78-14-12(3), the 60 day time period mentioned therein shall begin to run as of the date the Director causes the certificate of compliance to be served, the three day mailing period set forth in Section R156-78A-4(3) to be applied.

KEY: medical malpractice, prelitigation*
Effective May 16, 1997
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78-14-12(1)(b)

**PRELITIGATION PANEL
REVIEW RULES**

**R156-78A
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